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No. 1. STREET & SMITH, Publishers. NEW YORK. 29 Rose St., N. Y. 5 Cents.

THE GOLD MINE CASE.

OR, HOW CHICK'S SON BECAME A DETECTIVE.

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By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

OLD GLORY MINE.

"Look out, Dan, de water's risin'."

"Humph! I should t'ink 'tis. Hes de hull divide bruk loose?"

The speaker, up to his knees in the bed of a mountain stream, staggered as the fierce current surged against him with great force.

Like his companion, he had hold of a rowboat; having rowed until their oars were not strong enough for the current, they had got out and were now wading, pulling the boat along in the hope of finding smooth water above the rapids.

In this way they had traveled for two days, rowing or paddling when the water was smooth enough, and towing the boat over rough places.

They were in the wilds of Southern Alaska.

Two American miners hunting for gold.

Dan Fowler and John Drew were young men in years, but old when it comes to reckoning by hard labor and experience in searching for the precious yellow metal.

Having experienced various ups and downs of fortune in the gold fields of Wyoming and Colorado, they had drifted with the new tide of treasure hunters to the north, and for some months had been prospecting among the hundreds of islands along the Alaskan coast.

When they started on this search each had a comfortable stake, the fortunes from a lucky find at Cripple Creek.

Fortune had not favored them in Alaska at the start, and the time came when they saw the bottom of their pile approaching; then with the true spirit of adventure they invested every cent they had left in an outfit for exploring the mainland. This included a boat and a plentiful stock of provisions, and a small supply of mining tools.

It took them two or three weeks after leaving Sitka, the capital of Alaska, to

reach a point on the mainland where it seemed worth while to begin the serious hunt.

Their way had been by a most crooked course among the islands, and as neither of them was a mariner, it was very doubtful whether they could retrace their course by the same way they had come. This point, however, did not disturb them at all.

If only they could find gold they were certain that they could somehow find their way back to civilization.

They had tested the dirt at the mouths of several streams until finally they found one where there was a faint show of color. This was enough for them, and they started inland.

During the first day their journey had been comparatively easy, but on the second they found the land rising more and more abruptly and the stream becoming more and more difficult of navigation.

Their experienced eyes told them that if they could only surmount those particular rapids they would probably find a long stretch of comparatively level water above it.

They were struggling hopefully with the boat, when all of a sudden it was almost wrenched from their hands by what seemed to be a wave rushing down stream.

The water rose suddenly to their armpits.

They had no more than cried out in the words set down above, when they were lifted from their feet and swept away.

With fierce determination they clung to the boat, and after pounding over the rough bed of the stream for a few rods they came to a sudden halt at a bend.

The boat was jammed against a bank with Fowler under it on one side, and Drew clinging to it on the other.

"Are you hurt, Dan?" panted Drew as he tried to get around the end of the boat to help his comrade.

Fowler blew about a quart of water out of his mouth and responded:

"Purty nigh drownded, John, but no bones bruk."

Fortunately for them, the fierce current held the boat against the bank until Drew reached Fowler's side and helped him to his feet.

Then, pulling together, and assisted partly by the current, they managed to get the boat half out of the water.

"What's happened to the durned stream, anyway?" growled Fowler, looking in amazement at the wildly rushing water.

"Looks as ef some fellow's flume hed give way," remarked Drew, thoughtfully.

"'Tain't likely," responded Fowler, "thet any fellow's got a flume up above yere. More likely we're the fust white men es hev ever set foot in this yere country."

"Then," said Drew, "I reckon thet some lake hes bust her banks."

Both men looked critically at the roaring stream.

"It suttinly is just es ef a dam hed give way," remarked Fowler after a moment.

"Yep," responded Drew, "an' it's got over the worst ov it, I reckon."

It did seem as if the force of the torrent was decreasing.

"Look yere, Dan," cried Drew, suddenly, "this yere's our time to try the pan agin."

Without another word he waded into the stream and plunged his hands down to the bottom, bringing them up filled with gravel and bits of rock, which he tossed into the boat. With a glance at the boat to see that it was secure from being swept away, Fowler followed his comrade into the stream and operated in a similar fashion.

Presently one of them held up a small fragment of quartz that looked as if it had been torn off from a ledge recently.

"By gum!" he exclaimed, with sup-

pressed excitement, "but this yere's got the shine an' no mistake."

The other came to his side, and, standing waist deep in the torrent, they looked at the little piece of rock with greedy eyes.

The streaks of dull yellow upon its surface could be mistaken by nobody.

It was gold sure enough.

"It's just been ripped off some ledge by thet wave," exclaimed Fowler, excitedly.

"Exactly what I was thinkin'," responded Drew, "an' thet was why we tried the gravel. Let's see what the pan says."

They hurried to the boat, and for several minutes thereafter they occupied themselves in shaking their sieve-like pans in order to dispose of the worthless gravel.

When they had finished they found to their amazement several particles of pure gold, which, though not large, were sufficient to assure their experienced eyes that they had made a valuable discovery.

"We've hit it at last, Dan," said Drew.

"Thet we hev," was the response, "an' the only thing we hev got to do now is to find where it come from."

"Up stream, of course."

"Yep, but how far?"

Again they looked at the current, and again at the fragment of gold-bearing quartz.

"Thet was an all-fired powerful wave," remarked Fowler.

"But all the same it couldn't hev brung thet piece of rock more'n a mile or so."

"No, I reckon not."

Without further discussion they left their boat where it was and climbed along the bank of the stream until they came to the top of the rapids.

There they found, as they had expected, a stretch of comparatively smooth water; but it was so short that it did not seem sensible to drag the boat up to it.

Less than a hundred yards from the top of the rapids they saw the water was boiling and churning in a way that indicated another rapids of much greater force and depth than the one that had just blocked their way.

They decided that the one thing to do was to fasten their boat where it lay, cache their provisions, and proceed up stream on foot until they should find the ledge from which the gold in the river bed came.

This they proceeded to do, and about the middle of the afternoon they reached a point, perhaps two miles from the boat, where the stream flowed through a narrow cleft in a ledge.

On the other side of the ledge was a small lake, and it took them but a moment to see that its banks were so peculiarly arranged that the water would rise at intervals and overflow, thus sending down just such a wave as that which had overwhelmed them.

They found the gravel from the stream below the ledge wonderfully rich in free gold, and before sundown they had discovered that part of the ledge that seemed to be the hiding place of great quantities of the yellow metal.

Although these miners had had great experience in gold hunting; they were so excited by their discovery that for a moment or two they danced upon the bank of the stream like schoolboys.

"Dan," cried Drew, "let's give three cheers!"

"Hurrah!" responded Fowler, at the top of his lungs.

They both together cried "hurrah!" three times, and wound up with a tiger that could be heard miles away in the forest.

"We'll just settle this yere claim now an' for good," shouted Drew.

And he took from his inside pocket a small flag bearing the Stars and Stripes.

"I've just been waitin'," he said, "to

make some real good find so's to mark the claim with Old Glory."

"Do yer s'pose this is a part of the United States, John?" asked Fowler.

"I reckon 'tis."

"We can't be far from the boundary line, though."

"Puh! the queen don't own nothin' this side of the farthest mountains you can see to the east."

"P'r'aps not, but yer know there's a lot of territory yere that's in dispute between the two governments."

"I don't care a hang if there is. We're Americans, ain't we?"

"You bet."

"And we've found this mine, ain't we?"

"I reckon we hev."

"Then Old Glory goes up to mark the discovery and make known our claim to it."

While he was talking Drew had been cutting a branch from a small tree and fastening the flag to it. This done, he jammed the stick into a crevice in the rock and fastened it securely.

The flag fluttered bravely in the light breeze that was stirring, and both men hurrahed again.

"Let's give her a salute!" exclaimed Fowler.

Both men drew their revolvers and fired two shots into the air. Then, as it was growing dark, they decided to return to their boat and camp there for the night.

They supposed themselves alone in this wilderness, but all unknown to them there were eager, hostile eyes glaring on their operations from a thicket on the lake side of the ledge.

Perhaps their first cries of excitement resounding through the forest had attracted savage wanderers to the spot. At all events, there were crouching forms in the thicket when the Americans fired their salute.

After the prospectors had started down stream toward their boat, two figures crept stealthily over the ledge to the spot where Old Glory marked the new-found claim.

In the growing darkness these two figures picked up fragments of rock that had been broken off by the miners' hammers, and examined them.

Presently one of them raised his hand angrily to tear down the flag.

The other checked him, and after a whispered consultation both withdrew again to the thicket.

Next morning Fowler and Drew toiled up the slope again, bringing provisions and materials necessary for a camp, and after making three or four trips they had all their mining tools also upon the ground.

For all they knew or suspected, they were hundreds of miles from any other human being. Yet as they worked eagerly they were watched every minute by unseen eyes in the surrounding thicket.

For three days the miners worked almost incessantly. When it was dark they built a bonfire and drilled and blasted by its light.

They slept only when fatigue completely overcame them.

The reason for their tremendous labors lay in the fact that their blasts revealed more and more gold, and considerable quantities came out in what is known as the free state—that is, it was gold unmixed with any other metal and needing only the operation of the mint to turn it into money.

Such particles they stowed in the big belts they wore around their waists.

Quartz containing the color they heaped into a pile near the bank of the stream; selecting from it such samples as they intended to take back to Sitka for assaying.

It need hardly be said that it was not their plan to develop this wonderful mine

with only the few tools that they had brought with them.

They meant to work it sufficiently to prove its value and then to return to Sitka to organize a company which should supply sufficient capital to bring smelting machinery to the spot and, if necessary, to build a railroad to take the ore from the mine to the seashore.

They named their mine "The Old Glory," and set up other stakes beside the one that bore the flag, in order to include as much of the gold-bearing ledge as possible in their claim.

Day after day the unseen eyes glared at them from the thicket.

It was just about sundown on the third day when the miners first became aware that their operations were observed.

They were standing close together, examining a piece of quartz that had been loosened by their last blast.

Two shots rang out from the top of the ledge and Drew dropped to the ground.

Fowler was not hit.

A hasty glance toward the thicket showed him a little cloud of blue smoke rising, and another glance at his companion showed that Drew had been instantly killed.

It flashed upon Fowler's mind that the assassins had mistakenly aimed at the same man, and that as soon as they had discovered their mistake his own life would not be worth a candle.

He instantly jumped aside and darted into the forest at the base of the ledge. Hardly had he done so when his fears were justified by other shots from behind, and he heard bullets clipping the leaves and scarring the bark above his head.

CHAPTER II.

SAVED FROM A BULLET BY A LARIAT.

Fowler ran, as any man would whose life was in danger.

He kept well within the line of forest that bordered the bank of the stream, and for fully a mile he was aware that pursuit was hard and earnest behind him.

More than once there was a shot that was meant for him, and only escaped its mark by being turned aside by the trees.

When at last he reached the place where the boat lay against the bank he was well-nigh exhausted.

He had no doubt whatever that his enemies would be upon him soon, and as his comrade was beyond help he hastily untied the boat, shoved it into the stream and jumped in.

The current promptly set it going, and using a paddle simply to guide it, he sped down the rapids with the speed, as it seemed to him, of a locomotive.

It took all his skill and strength to prevent the boat from being wrecked upon the numerous rocks that lined the rapids, and when he was in comparatively still water he paddled for all he was worth; so shortly after sundown he had made the entire descent of the stream and was on the open sea.

There were islands that by daylight would be well in sight, and heading his boat for one of them at a guess, he set to rowing.

All night long he kept at his task, and when morning came he could see land in every direction. He knew, therefore, that he was among the numerous islands upon the Alaskan coast.

Most of them are entirely uninhabited, and he had not the slightest idea which direction to take to get to a town or to get into the track of steam or sailing vessels.

Fortunately a considerable portion of the provisions taken by him and Drew was left in the boat. Living was therefore an easy matter as long as the weather held good, and this it did for several days; then fortune favored him again by bringing him in the way of a steamer bound for Sitka.

He was taken on board, and it was

about ten days after the tragedy at Old Glory Mine that he landed in the Alaskan capital and went at once to a hotel, where he expected to find friends.

He found not only friends, but many others who gathered around and listened to his story eagerly.

"The p'int is," he concluded, "that there's nothin' lost except poor Drew's life. The beastly redskins thet did for him an' druv me out can be cleaned out by a dozen men; an' what we want to do is to get up a company thet will not only work the mine, but fight for it."

There were plenty of hearty, determined men in the party of listeners who agreed to this proposition; among them, however, were some who listened seriously and looked doubtful.

One of these was a well-built young fellow, a mere boy in years, who said nothing until the others had discussed the situation at considerable length; then he asked:

"Did you see the redskins, stranger?"

Fowler hardly glanced at the boy as he answered:

"No, I didn't. I 'low freely thet I cut an' run es fast es I could, for I'm not hankerin' to face a gang of bloodthirsty Indians."

"Thet's right 'nuff," remarked the boy, thoughtfully, "but how many shots was thar?"

At this question Fowler looked sharply at the boy and was apparently displeased; he noticed, however, to his surprise, that the other men in the room were listening attentively, as if they had considerable respect for anything that the lad might have to say.

"I didn't stop to do no countin', young feller," Fowler said, curtly. "But ef you're anxious to keep tab on 'em, I should say es it might hev bin a dozen all told; but let me tell you, ef you had been thar you wouldn't hev counted more'n three or four before you'd hev got tired of countin', you hear me!"

The listeners smiled grimly at this, and the lad nodded quietly. It was evident that he took no offense at Fowler's remarks, and that he was determined to get a satisfactory answer to his questions.

"A dozen shots all told," he said, slowly, "means thet you included the shots fired at you es you was hittin' it up through the timber?"

"H'm, h'm."

Fowler turned his back partly on the boy as if disgusted with his impertinence.

"Well, now," the lad persisted, "you needn't be so uppish, for I may be j'inin' your expedition, and I want ter know about it."

"You!" exclaimed Fowler, turning sharply upon him and looking at him contemptuously.

"H'm, h'm," murmured the boy.

"You'd better answer him, Dan," said one of the men. "Trim is a feller who hes seen a durned sight more of the world than the rest of us put together, an' what he don't know about American Indians could be printed in a vest-pocket book."

Fowler's contempt turned to surprise as he eyed the lad before him.

"Well, Trim," he said, slowly, "ef thet's your name——"

"Trim goes, pardner," the lad interrupted. "I'm jest a-thinkin' thet thar's somethin' peculiar about thet attack on your mine, an' ef so be you keer to, I'd like to hev you tell us once more about them shots."

"Well," responded Fowler, "thar was two first off, an' them both hit Drew, es I reckon one of 'em was meant fer me, but the fellers what was picked ter do the firin' got mixed up in thar orders an' both picked off the same man, see?"

"Plain es day," assented Trim; "but thar was only two, was thar?"

"That's all, until after I got to run-

The boy gave a little grunt and thought a moment.

"Hear any yellin' or hootin'?" he asked.

"Nary a hoot."

There was a pause here for a moment, and then one of the men asked:

"What be ye drivin' at, Trim?"

"Oh, nothin'," he responded; "I was jest a-thinkin', thet's all."

He edged his way out of the group and disappeared from the room without another word.

"Seems to be rather a peart youngster," remarked Fowler after the lad had gone. "Who is he?"

"His name's Carter," replied one of the men. "He's a son of Chickering Carter, the New York detective——"

"What!" exclaimed Fowler. "He as is connected with Nick Carter?"

"The same."

"Well," said Fowler, "but sech a feller might hev likely idees, eh?"

"We all hev found that Trim's purty bright," said one of the men.

"Wonder what 'twas he was a-thinkin' of?"

"He'll tell you when he gets good an' ready, and not before," declared one of the bystanders; "an' when he does tell you, it'll be worth listenin' to."

"Call him back!" cried Fowler. "I ain't got no objection to takin' advice from a youngster ef he's got good advice to offer. Whar is he?"

But Trim was nowhere to be found.

The conversation about Old Glory Mine was continued until after dark.

Fowler exhibited the free gold that he had stowed in his belt as evidence of the quality of the mine, and a good deal of excitement was aroused for recovering the property.

It was along toward midnight when the discussion ended, and Fowler set off to go to a cabin on the outskirts of the city, where there was a friend with whom he intended to lodge.

When he left the hotel a boyish figure slipped out from a dark doorway and followed silently behind him.

Almost nobody was stirring upon the streets, and presently Fowler turned into a road that was wholly unoccupied.

He had gone but a few paces when there was a sudden whir in the air behind him.

The miner knew the sound and would have jumped aside, but before he could so much as stir a muscle a lariat bound itself about his shoulders, and he was pulled sharply to the ground.

At the same instant there was the flash of a gun a few feet distant from him. A loud report, and a bullet whistled harmlessly over the fallen miner's body.

Quick as a flash, Trim, the youngster who had thrown the lariat, leaped forward and knelt for an instant beside Fowler, to discover whether the man was injured.

"I've saved you from thet bullet," exclaimed Trim, hurriedly. "Now let's see ef I can find the feller thet fired it."

CHAPTER III.

TRIM GIVES A KEY TO HIS SUSPICIONS.

Fowler was so surprised about what had happened, and his sudden fall had so knocked the wind out of him, that he could not say a word.

He lay on the ground, staring and gasping as Trim knelt over him.

When the young fellow stood up, he added:

"Get on your feet, pardner, and leg back to the hotel as fast as you can go."

Without waiting to see whether his advice were taken, Trim sped down the street, following the sound of rapidly retreating footsteps.

The man who had tried to murder

Fowler had turned and run the moment he fired.

One could have told by the sound of his steps that he was making the best time possible, but his speed was as nothing compared to that of his young pursuer.

It is doubtful whether there was an Indian in all Alaska who could have beaten Trim Carter in a sprint, and this man, whoever he was, had no show whatever for escape.

Trim, running as lightly as a cat, was upon him within a hundred yards. The fellow apparently did not know that his pursuer was near until Trim leaped upon him.

The would-be murderer was a medium-sized, heavily-built man, and in a straight wrestling match probably would have overcome his youthful antagonist; but as both were running at full speed and Trim not only threw all his weight against him, but struck him sharply on the head at the same time, the fellow stumbled and fell full length.

Trim, to keep himself from falling also, bounded over him and was carried two or three paces beyond. He turned quickly, and none too soon, for his antagonist was not only stunned by the collision, but he had fallen in such a way that it happened to be the simplest thing in the world for him to get on his knees and draw his revolver.

It was altogether too dark to observe the man's exact movements, but Trim could see the dim outlines of a figure rising from the ground, and he knew only too well what that meant.

He had had sufficient experience in knocking about the world, and especially in mining camps of the West, to know that this fellow would shoot first and make explanations afterward.

Accordingly, Trim jumped with all his might directly against the fellow, landing just in time to knock his revolver arm aside.

The weapon was not fired.

The lad's movements had been too quick for that.

This second attack sent the would-be murderer again to the ground, and Trim went down with him.

They grappled there, the young fellow doing his best to wrest the weapon away from the other, and the latter trying with all his great strength to point the muzzle at Trim's heart.

Close as their faces were to each other, it was impossible for Trim to recognize the features of his enemy.

Neither of them spoke a word, for both of them were fighting too desperately to talk.

The struggle had continued but a few seconds, although to each man it doubtless seemed minutes, when somebody came up hastily.

Trim was just aware of the approaching footsteps, when he was knocked clean away from his adversary by a terrific blow upon the head.

Just as drowning men will clutch at straws, the young fellow, as he half staggered and half rolled across the street, clutched at whatever was in his reach.

He went down in a heap at last, and for a few seconds lay perfectly still.

He was not entirely unconscious; there was a loud buzzing in his ears, mingled with which he had a vague sense of retreating footstpes, while a million stars danced before his eyes.

Presently he got to his feet, and with one hand upon his head, reeled to the side of a building against which he leaned for a moment.

"Gee whiz!" he muttered; "that was the worst cyclone that ever come my way. I didn't suppose they raised such things up here."

For a moment longer he held his aching head, and then he began to laugh.

"The laugh is on me dead for certain this time," he remarked to himself.

"I'm glad I didn't let on to the fellows at the hotel what my suspicions were. I've had a scrap and I've been licked. I'm the only fellow that knows anything about it so far, and if I can find that man Fowler, I'll see that he keeps his mouth shut about the whole thing."

He started to walk, but found that his brain was still reeling from the effects of the blow, and again he reached out his hand to the building for support.

He laughed again in amusement at his queer plight, and then for the first time realized that his left hand was clutched tightly and that something was in it.

"Hello!" he said, "I wonder what I've brought away?"

He opened his hand and felt of the object it held with his finger ends.

"A button," he murmured, "and a small bit of cloth clinging to it. Humph! this may come handy if I take a hand in this thing after to-night.

"I reckon I shall do just that same, for I'm more certain than ever that there's the worst kind of crookedness afoot here, and besides that, these fellows have got my blood up."

He thrust the button and fragment of cloth into a pocket and started on.

He had now recovered sufficiently to walk without any special difficulty. As he went his mind was busy in reviewing the situation.

"There must have been two of them," he reflected. "Of course there were; for that fellow I had on the ground couldn't have hit me any such blow.

"I wonder if they thought they did for me? I wonder, too, if they knew who I was? I reckon not, for they couldn't see me any more than I could see them, and it's not likely that they suspect me of coming to Fowler's defense.

"Which way am I going, anyhow?"

He stopped abruptly in his walk, realizing suddenly that he had been so stunned by the blow that he was not aware of the direction he had taken.

Standing thus and looking about in the darkness to discover some familiar object, he saw a figure move stealthily away from a building a few paces distant.

"Hello, there!" called Trim, instantly alert.

"I've got you covered, stranger," he added, "and you'd better halt where you are, or you won't get any farther."

The figure stopped at once, and after a very brief pause Trim heard a voice saying:

"I reckon I knows that voice; ain't you the young feller thet lassoed me? Ef you be, it's all right."

Trim recognized Fowler's voice and promptly went forward. Just as he came up to the miner the moon came from behind dark clouds and showed him Fowler standing there with his arms bound close to his side, the lariat being still around his shoulders and body.

"Well," said Trim, with a laugh, "I'm glad to see you, but what are you standing thar for?"

"What in thunder should I do, I'd like to know?" returned Fowler, indignantly.

"Do!" retorted Trim. "I told you to go to the hotel."

"In this shape?"

"Well, you could take off the cord."

"Oh, could I?"

Trim laughed again.

"Is it too tight for you?" he asked.

"Tight!" returned Fowler; "it's worse than a steel chain. I wasn't goin' to go along to the hotel an' show myself pulled up just es ef I was a steer at a roundup."

"I don't blame you," said Trim, "and I'll fix you."

He began to undo the cord, which had knotted itself behind Fowler's back.

While he was at work at this, Fowler went on:

"You're a mighty smart young feller, but I'd like to know what in thunder all

this is about. It ain't the most pleasant thing in the world to hev a lariat flung at you when you're on your way home."

"There's one thing," responded Trim, "that isn't half so pleasant as that."

"Eh?"

"If it hadn't been for this lariat you wouldn't hev been able to complain of it."

"Thet don't mean nothin'," growled Fowler, stretching his arms, which were now free.

"Don't, eh?" exclaimed Trim. "Now look here, pardner, if you don't understand what's happened, I shall hev to tell you.

"I hed a notion of my own that somebody would try to do you to-night for the dust you've got on you, see?"

"I ain't got no more dust," returned Fowler, "than plenty of other men that are now in Sitka."

"No, but you showed your pile, and besides that——"

Trim hesitated a moment; he was on the point of explaining to Fowler his own suspicions as to the attempt at murder, but an instant's reflection convinced him that he had better keep his thoughts to himself, so he added:

"No matter about that. The point is that I felt certain thet you would be done, and so I followed along. I wanted the attack to be made on you, so es to be certain thet I was right, but I didn't want you to get hurt.

"Now, you were moseyin' along, and you didn't hev any notion you were in danger, and you didn't hev your eyes peeled. I did. And though 'twas too dark to see much, I did manage to catch sight of somebody dodging behind a building a little ways in front of you.

"Thet means an ambush, says I to myself, and I flung the lariat simply for the purpose of yanking you out of the way of thet fellow's bullet, and I reckon I did it."

"Yes, I reckon you did, an' I'm obleeged to you. I wasn't complainin' of it so much es I wanted to git an understandin' of the thing; and thet's the reason es much es anything why I stayed around yere hopin' you'd come back."

"Well, I'm yere," said Trim, "and now you want to go back to the hotel. Don't show yourself again to-night."

"Well, but," Fowler protested, "what's in your head, young feller? You was askin' questions at the hotel thet seemed mighty peculiar. Now, I reckon you'll allow thet I'm the most interested party. Give us your idees."

"Perhaps I ain't got any."

"Oh, yes, you hev! You're a son of a feller thet's known everywhere es a mighty clever detective; 'tain't likely thet you hevn't got some of his smartness; in fact, I know you hev.

"I'm certain thet one idee out of your head would be worth twenty of mine or any other feller's in Sitka."

"Thanks!" responded Trim, dryly. "I'm not so sure of thet. I never did a job of detective work in my life."

"I don't s'pose this is a detective job," remarked Fowler, thoughtfully. "I hevn't looked at it in thet light. It's es plain es day thet I was driven away from Old Glory Mine by savages; an' it's also es plain es day thet some galoot yere in Sitka made a break for my pile. I'd like to hev thet feller caught an' strung up, an' I'd like to hev the savages cleaned out, an' thet's all there's to it."

Trim gave a little grunt that was as much as to say that he did not think Fowler knew as much about the matter as he thought he did.

"Thar you go again!" cried Fowler. "You're holdin' back idees that I want to know about. Ef it's any question of gettin' paid for your work——"

"Oh, rats!" interrupted Trim, impatiently. "I'm not out for stuff; I'm

knockin' around the world for the fun of it and to see what I can learn.

"This thing interests me, and I've a mind to take a hand in it, an' thet will be for the fun of it, too.

"Ef I can help you get possession of your mine, I'm goin' to do it, but I'm not in it for pay, see?"

"Well, I didn't mean to give no offense," said Fowler, "but I do think es you ought to give me the benefit of your ideas."

"I'll tell you just one thing, said Trim after a moment's thought, "but thet must be on the understandin' thet you don't let it out to the crowd; keep it to yourself, will you?"

"I will, so help me."

"All right, then; it's simply this: It wasn't Indians or any other kind of savages thet fired on you and your pardner at the Old Glory Mine."

CHAPTER IV.

TRIM'S ELECTRICAL PURSE.

For a moment Fowler stood speechless. Then he exclaimed:

"What the mischief makes you think thet?"

"Two or three things," Trim replied. "In the first place, the American Indian doesn't make any mistake when he sets out to slaughter white men. Two Indians who hev made up their minds to kill two men would never accidentally pick out the same man—thet's a white man's mistake."

"Well, maybe 'tis," said Fowler, "but we hed no reason to s'pose there was any white men in thet part of the country. We didn't see any signs of any."

"Didn't see any signs of red men, did you?"

"Nary a one."

"And you were there yourselves, weren't you?"

"Reckon we were, Trim."

"What were you there for?"

"Gold, of course."

"And isn't that reason enough some other white man should be thar?"

"Yes," admitted Fowler, doubtfully. "But it don't seem es ef white men would murder prospectors like thet."

"We're not talkin' of decent men," Trim responded. "Now, thar's another thing to convince me thet red men had no hand in it."

"What's thet?"

"Ef it had been Indians who pursued you they would have caught you."

"Thet looks likely."

"Indians can beat white men any time in running through a forest."

"Thet's so."

"And besides thet, ef it had been Indians, they would hev hed the mine surrounded so thet no matter what direction you ran in you would hev been headed off, see?"

"By gum, Trim! 'Pears to me you're talkin' reason."

"You bet I am. But keep thet to yourself."

"I will——"

"Hist!"

A man was slowly approaching.

He proved to be one of the local police officers. He looked at Trim and Fowler suspiciously and asked:

"Been a shootin' match somewhere yere?"

Trim nudged his companion and answered:

"Shouldn't wonder."

"I thought I heard a shot from this direction a few minutes ago," remarked the policeman.

"I heard it, too," said Trim.

"What was the matter?" asked the officer.

"Give it up," Trim answered. "I tried to find out, but couldn't; we were just talking it over and were going back to the hotel."

The officer was satisfied and passed on.

"Why didn't you tell him about it?" whispered Fowler.

"Because we don't want to find out too much about this thing just now."

"That's funny! Why not?"

"Because——" Trim hesitated. "See yere, pardner!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "I've given you the key to my suspicions about this thing, and I don't want to say anything more.

"I'll simply warn you thet in my opinon ef we should run down the feller thet tried to do for you to-night, you'd likely lose the Old Glory Mine.

"Now, ef you want to follow my advice, you get a company of men together, ready to go and take possession of thet mine, an' you'll need to hev fighters, too."

"Thare ain't nobody more anxious to do thet than I am," said Fowler.

"See thet you hurry about it, then."

"Will you go along, too?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Whare are you goin' now?"

"I'm goin' to see what I can find out."

"Do you want me with you?"

"No; you go back to the hotel an' lay low until daylight."

Fowler was greatly impressed with the boy's cleverness, and although he would have liked to go with Trim, he obeyed the lad's advice.

As soon as Fowler was out of hearing, Trim started to another part of Sitka, and presently entered a barroom that was kept open all night in defiance of the law.

He was admitted after giving a secret knock at the door, which he had learned early in his stay in the Alaskan capital.

A dozen or more men were inside, some of whom were known to Trim.

All except the bartenders were men interested one way and another in mines. Most of them were prospectors who had either just returned from trips of exploration or were just about to set out.

Two or three were tough characters such as always are to be found hanging around places where miners congregate.

In the party was an Englishman named Berkeley. He had been in Sitka for about three days, trying to interest various men in a mine that he claimed to have discovered on the mainland.

He nodded to Trim when the young fellow entered and invited him to have a drink.

"Too late," Trim responded; "I've had all I want for to-night."

"That's right," said Berkeley; "never take more than you want."

With this he poured himself a drink and wished Trim good health as he drained the glass.

The shrewd lad could see that Berkeley wanted to talk with him, so he leaned against the bar negligently and asked:

"Anything new in mining matters?"

Berkeley glanced around the room as if to see whether anybody were listening, then he said in a low voice:

"There is and there isn't, Mr. Carter."

"Ah!" thought Trim; "this putting of the Mr. before my name is taffy as sure as a gun. He's going to try to pull my leg for something."

Trim made no response aloud, but looked at Berkeley inquiringly.

"You've heard, haven't you," Berkeley said, "of the mining property I'm interested in?"

"H'm, h'm."

"It's one of the richest discoveries ever made on this coast."

"Is it?"

"You could stake your life on it, Mr. Carter."

"Where is it?"

"On the mainland."

"Anywhere near the Old Glory?"

"The what?"

"The Old Glory."

"What's that?"

"Haven't you heard about it?"

Berkeley shook his head and looked keenly at the lad.

"There was a man came in by boat this evening," Trim said, "who discovered a mine somewhere on the mainland that he called the Old Glory; he was driven away from it by a pack of Indians."

"Oh," responded Berkeley, "I did hear something about that, but I hadn't caught the name of the mine. Where is it located?"

"All I know is that it is on the mainland."

"What is this man going to do about it?"

The Englishman asked this question with an appearance of carelessness, but Trim was perfectly satisfied that he was much interested.

"That's more than I know," the boy responded. "I heard his story up at one of the hotels, and left him there while he was still talking about it."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Since when?"

"Why, since you left him at the hotel."

Trim looked puzzled and innocent.

"Why, how should I?" he asked. "If you want to see him yourself, you can probably find him there."

"Oh, it's no matter—no matter," Berkeley returned, hastily; and he poured himself another drink.

Trim watched him from the corner of his eye while he was drinking, and made up his mind that Berkeley was trying to conceal something.

"He came pretty near getting off his guard," thought Trim. "I wonder what he would let out if I should press him a bit?"

A moment later Berkeley turned to the lad and said:

"About my mine, now. Wouldn't you like to take shares yourself, Mr. Carter?"

"Me?" remarked Trim, with a grin; "me? Why, I'm simply knocking around here with only enough money to pay my way. I've got no capital."

"Ah! but there must be plenty of more money where yours comes from."

"Well, I reckon there is."

"If you saw a good thing, now, it wouldn't be like you to let it go, would it?"

"I reckon not."

"It don't take so much, you know, Mr. Carter, to get an interest in an undeveloped mine."

"How much, for instance?"

"Well, my pardner and I are willing to let a good share of the mine go for a very small sum. We need a few hundred dollars, just to work the thing sufficiently to show what it is worth, and then we can get ten times—yes, a hundred times more than is put up for it by selling the mine to a syndicate."

"Sounds like a good scheme!"

"Indeed it is, Mr. Carter. Now, a young man like you couldn't be traveling about this way unless you had a few hundred dollars handy.

"All you would need to do would be to guarantee the use of it for a couple of weeks, and before the time came when you would have to draw on your next allowance, why, you would have a fortune in your pocket."

"That's interesting."

"You'd better come in, Mr. Carter; the opportunity won't be open very much longer; we shall find somebody in Sitka who will back it."

"I reckon you will."

"You could easily put up, say, a thousand dollars, couldn't you?"

"Shouldn't wonder."

"If you would," and here Berkeley's voice became very confidential, "we won't mind giving you a quarter interest in the scheme."

"Generous," Trim remarked, dryly.

"We mean to be," responded Berkely, earnestly. "Think it over, Mr. Carter."

"I will."

Trim moved away from the bar.

"You're not going so soon, are you?" called Berkeley.

"Yes, I was only loafing around long enough to get sleepy, and now I'm going to bed."

The young fellow had stayed as long in the place as he cared to. His one purpose in going there was to find, it possible, some man whose coat was minus a button and a fragment of cloth.

There was nobody in the place when he entered whose coat appeared to have suffered such a loss.

A man had come in while the conversation with Berkeley was in progress, and Trim eyed him with especial care; his name was Mark Slote. He also was an Englishman, and, as Trim believed, a partner of Berkeley's.

Slote had been among those at the hotel when Fowler was telling his story. Berkeley appeared to pay no attention to Slote when he entered, and Trim felt a little disappointed.

"If I'm mistaken in all this," he thought, "I shall be more glad than ever that I've not given my suspicions away."

"I'll see you to-morrow, Mr. Carter," said Berkeley as Trim started toward the door.

"All right," replied the lad. "When do you intend to start for this mine of yours?"

"That isn't decided yet."

Trim halted; it occurred to him that it might be a good plan to get further information from Berkeley while the man was in a talking mood, so he asked two or three questions in an indifferent manner, but Berkeley had suddenly become very silent. He answered no questions directly.

After a minute or two Trim again started for the door; he noticed then that Slote had disappeared; at the time Trim thought nothing of this, but a little later had reason to regard the man's movements as extremely suspicious.

After the legal closing hour no one was permitted to come in or go out of the barroom by the main door. An entrance at the back was used that opened upon a crooked lane or alley that led around to the street at some little distance from the barroom.

This alley seemed to be deserted when Trim left the barroom, but just as he rounded a bend he found himself confronted by two men.

They were walking rapidly, and he stepped back a pace to avoid a collision.

"Hello!" said one of them, suddenly, as if surprised at meeting anybody; "what time is it, stranger?"

"That's an old gag," thought Trim; "do these fellows think that this is the Bowery and that I am a jay from Hayseedville?"

Whatever the fellows thought, they did not give the lad time to answer their question or get out of their way.

One of them threw his arm across Trim's throat and slipped around behind him, pulling his head back violently.

"Hands up, there!" said the other, suddenly.

Trim's hands promptly went into the air, and as he threw them up he said to himself:

"I never was garroted before, but it strikes me this is a clumsy way of doing it."

He made no attempt whatever at resistance, but stood like a statue. The man in front of him drew a revolver and pointed it straight at Trim's face; the muzzle was so close that the lad could almost feel it.

The other, still holding his arm across Trim's throat, thrust his hand into the lad's pocket, where he carried a pursefull of coins.

Trim did not budge.

All at once the arm across his throat was released, and the fellow who stood behind him jumped about a foot in the air and uttered a sharp cry of pain.

He tried to get his hand out of Trim's pocket, but could not succeed; and for a moment or two he danced wildly around cursing and groaning.

The cry of pain was followed instantly by the report of a revolver, and the weapon held by the man who was facing Trim fell to the ground, while the man himself jumped back and held his bleeding hand wonderingly before his eyes.

"There are five shots more where that

one came from," Trim remarked, coolly, "and you fellows can march along ahead of me to the barracks or take these shots in your hearts, just which you like."

At this moment the garroter managed to get his hand out of Trim's pocket. He leaped to one side, and in doing so stumbled and fell to his knees.

"You might as well stay in that position," remarked Trim as he lowered his hands.

It appeared then that he had a revolver in each hand.

The two ruffians stared at him in amazement.

"Funny, isn't it?" said Trim, sarcastically. "I don't mind telling you fellows all about it; this is what I call an improvement on Nick Carter's scheme of concealing barkers in his sleeves.

"Mine are so fixed that when I raise my hands above my head the weapons come right up from my wrists, so that I can get hold of them.

"You didn't see that, and I don't suppose anybody would who wasn't looking for it. Now march!"

He spoke in such a determined voice that the men were confident that he would end their lives on the spot if they did not obey, so they slowly turned about and started toward the street.

The one of them whose fingers had been wounded by Trim's bullet reached his well hand toward a pocket, probably to draw a handkerchief for the purpose of stemming the flow of blood.

"Stop that!" Trim commanded, sternly; "you've both got sore hands, but you've got to let them alone until the surgeon at the barracks can attend to them."

The men cursed under their breath, but went along immediately.

Trim, excited and rejoicing over the success of his device, could not help joking the fellows sarcastically:

"'Twouldn't be so easy picking pockets if every fellow carried a purse like mine, eh?" he asked.

The response was an angry growl.

"I suppose your fingers are aching too much to make you feel pleasant," Trim continued, "and no wonder, for unless you know how to take hold of my purse it will reach out iron claws and grip you worse than a lobster, and as the thing works by a little electric battery inside the purse, you get the advantage of a shock as well as a thundering tight pinch.

"Good scheme, isn't it?"

Neither of the men answered any such questions, and so driving them before him and making jeering remarks all the way, Trim brought them at last to the door of the barracks; there he handed them over to the military authorities.

They proved to be tough characters who had done time in Sitka before.

They were either too much hurt to talk freely or they had some other reason for saying little.

The usual questions put to prisoners were answered shortly and in a surly manner.

Trim was convinced from their manner that there was more to the affair than a mere attempt at robbery, and when he left the barracks to go to his hotel it was with the determination to pump the prisoners, if possible, on the next day.

From the way they acted it seemed to him that somebody must have put them up to the job.

CHAPTER V.

IN A PACK OF SNARLING DOGS.

The next morning pretty nearly the entire population of Sitka tried to get into the court house to hear the proceedings against the two toughs who had attacked Trim.

Ordinarily the arrest of such fellows in Sitka attracted no more attention than such events do in a city like New York; but on this occasion there was a double reason for interest in the matter.

In the first place, Trim, during his few days' stay in town, had become a general favorite with all classes.

He was welcomed in the homes of the government officials, who compose what is known as society there.

He was eagerly received at the barracks and everywhere else that the soldiers gathered; and no one was more welcome in the loafing places of the mining population than the young traveler from the States.

There was, therefore, a great deal of

interest aroused in the adventure through which Trim had come triumphantly, and in which many another grown man might have lost not only his valuables, but his life as well.

In the second place, Trim, for reasons of his own, had taken pains to spread the news of the affair among all classes of the population.

He was not only convinced that these two ruffians had been put up to the job, but that in some way their attempt was connected with the attack on the Old Glory Mine.

He wished to make certain that all friends of the prisoners should be in court so that he could observe their faces.

In this effort the lad was successful so far as packing the court room was concerned. He did not accomplish what he hoped to, but that is not to be set down to his discredit; it is rather very much to his credit that he should have undertaken so shrewd a plan for gaining a single point in his investigation.

When the prisoners were under examination they hung their heads and answered in low tones, and no bullying or threatening by the district attorney could make them modify their answers or accuse any one of having a hand in the affair except themselevs.

The trial ended, of course, in the sentence of both men to severe punishment, and when court adjourned Trim found that nearly half the day had been spent.

He had already had some little conversation with Fowler, and one result of this was that while the trial of the garroters was in progress, Fowler was scouring the island in search of some kind of a boat, big enough and swift enough to take a party of men to the mainland for the purpose of recovering possession of Old Glory.

As he was leaving the court room, Trim encountered Berkeley in the crowd.

"Have you thought about that matter, Mr. Carter?" Berkeley whispered.

"Yes," Trim replied. "I'm in a hurry just now; I'll see you later."

"Well——" began Berkeley; but Trim had elbowed his way through the throng and was out of hearing.

"He's still anxious to get hold of my wad," thought Trim; "as long as he feels that way I think we've got time to do what's necessary."

The lad was now trying to find Fowler.

As he hurried from one place to another many complimentary remarks were made to him and many an admiring glance was sent after him. He was not what would be called an overgrown youngster; he seemed somewhat older than his real years, but that was because of the manly, confident expression in his eyes rather than because of his height.

Trim had grown slowly, so that his muscles now were almost as firm as those of a man. He was not thin or even slender, yet there was not a waste ounce of flesh upon his body.

As a grizzled old miner put it: he was all bone, muscle and nerve, "and three-quarters nerve, sir."

He had left school comparatively early, not because he disliked study from books, but because his father believed that his education could be completed better by travel than by sticking to the school room.

He had seen a good deal of the world, therefore, and had learned long since to depend upon himself.

Having no need to work for a living, he had not seriously thought of becoming a detective, though many times he longed for something in that line to do.

About noon Trim found Fowler returning from one of the docks.

"Well, Trim," said Fowler, "I've got a boat."

"Good! What's she like?"

"A schooner that's big enough, and in her time she was swift enough; she used to be a poacher."

"She ought to do for us, then."

"Well, I don't know; when she was in the service of taking seals and keeping out of the way of the government patrol boats, I reckon she could do a handy bit of runnin', but she hain't got the rig for it now, an' she's seen a good deal of nasty weather."

"She's the best you could find, I suppose?"

"The best an' pretty much the only one."

"Let's take a look at her."

They returned to the dock together

and Trim went over the schooner from stem to stern.

She was called the *Frozen Spray*. Evidently an old tub, but apparently sound and still capable of showing good speed if properly handled.

"She'll do," Trim remarked. "Now the thing to do is to fit her out. How many men have you got who have promised to go?"

"A dozen, countin' you and me."

"Don't get any more, then, for that will be an unlucky number."

"Will a dozen be enough?"

"I haven't a doubt of it, if they're good ones."

"They're the pick of the best men," said Fowler, gravely, "who've come to Alaska from the mines in the States."

Trim nodded in a satisfied way, and they started back toward their hotel discussing the plans for provisioning and fitting out the vessel.

Fowler wanted to delay the departure long enough to put on board a considerable quantity of mining implements, so that the work at Old Glory could be pushed to the utmost.

Trim advised against this.

"You want to get hold of your mine first," he said. "When you're sure you've got it and that you can hold it, then you can leave part of your men there and return to Sitka, hunt up capitalists, and sell the mine, or work it, just as you choose."

Fowler argued that there would be a better showing for a profitable sale if the ledge at Old Glory could be tunneled to a considerable distance before bringing capitalists to inspect it; but Trim was obstinate in his advice to get the expedition off with as little delay as possible.

Fowler yielded and immediately after dinner went to various stores, where he purchased provisions and ammunition and ordered them stowed on board.

It was understood that if possible the expedition would start early the next day.

Trim did his share in making matters ready and contributed not a little from his own purse to the expenses of the expedition, which were necessarily heavy.

A good deal of his time and attention, however, was spent in roaming about Sitka, always in the hope of meeting some man whose coat was minus a button, or of finding some other information which should strengthen his suspicions as to the truth about the attack on Old Glory.

He was passing a telegraph office when the sound of a distant steam whistle came to his ears.

This attracted the attention of everybody in his vicinity, and almost immediately all Sitka was rushing down to the docks.

The arrival of a steamboat there is such a rare event that when it happens everbody turns out to witness it.

Trim did not join the crowd of curiosity seekers at once. His attention was taken by Berkeley, who at that moment came from the telegraph office.

His face showed signs of great excitement, and in his hand he held, crumpled, a slip of manila paper—undoubtedly a telegram he had just received.

"Something's up with him," thought Trim, and he crossed the street to speak to Berkeley.

The lad had nothing special to say, but he hoped that Berkeley would drop into conversation and so give up some hint as to what was on his mind.

Berkeley saw him as he approached and instantly his face became grave.

He thrust the telegram into a pocket, or rather he tried to do so, for some one passing at the moment jostled his hand and the slip of paper fell to the ground.

Berkeley apparently did not notice the accident. Trim quietly put his foot upon the paper and said:

"Have you got time to talk about that mining matter now?"

"You're too late, sonny," was the contemptuous response.

"He doesn't think it worth while to mister me any longer," thought Trim.

"You've got your stuff, have you?"

"We're amply supplied with capital," replied Berekley, stiffly. "I mentioned the matter to you simply because you were a young man and I thought that you might like the chance of getting rich suddenly."

"Thanks," responded Trim, dryly, and as Berkeley turned away he picked up the telegram.

It would have been almost impossible to avoid seeing what was written upon it, even if he had not tried to do so. As a matter of fact, however, Trim did not hesitate to read the message. It said simply:

"*Colonia* due Sitka to-day. Go."

There was no signature, but the message was addressed to Berkeley.

"I say, Mr. Berkeley," cried Trim, running after the man, "isn't this yours?" And he held up the dispatch.

"Lord Harry, yes!" Berkely answered, nervously feeling in his pockets. "Where did you get it?"

"It was on the ground near where you were standing. I thought it must be that you had dropped it."

Berkeley took the dispatch, eying Trim suspiciously, and then, with a muttered "thank you," he turned on his heels and hurried toward the docks.

"*Colonia* due in Sitka to-day," mused Trim. "Now, what does that mean? It's probably the name of a boat.

"Gee whiz! Suppose it should be the steamer that just whistled and that Berkeley is going to have control of her!"

This thought excited the lad very considerably, and he started for the docks, hurrying as hard as any of the rest.

Trim had told nobody but Fowler of his suspicions that white men had been the attackers at Old Glory.

The lad had become convinced of that while Fowler had been telling his story in the hotel the evening before.

He had also felt that there was something wrong in the intense interest displayed in the story by the Englishman Slote.

He had seen Slote leave the room shortly after Fowler opened his belt and displayed the free gold that he carried there.

It was this action more than anything else that had led Trim to shadow Fowler later in the evening.

He had succeeded in saving Fowler's life, but he was not certain that Slote had had anything to do with the attack; nevertheless, putting together such circumstances as he knew and Berkeley's talk about a rich mine on the mainland, he was compelled to think that Berkeley and Slote were aiming to get possession of Fowler's property.

He believed, also, that they were the men who had committed the murder there, and that they had hired the two ruffians to garrote himself.

These matters were all pure suspicion with him up to this time, and it was difficult for him to make his theory hang together, but he clung to it obstinately, and he felt now that if the steamer now coming into port should be one in which Berkeley was interested, the fact would go a long way to justify his suspicions.

The steamer, a small affair, very much like a harbor tug in appearance, lay a few hundred yards from the dock when Trim put in an appearance.

A small boat had put out from her and was now coming ashore; and then he saw Berkeley and Slote get into it together, and start back to the steamer as fast as the boat could be rowed; then Trim turned about and hurried to the hotel, where he expected to find Fowler and the other men who had promised to join the expedition.

Thinking to make a short cut, he left the main street and started along a winding road, on which the houses were comparatively scattered.

The dwellers along this road were mostly Indians and civilized Esquimaux.

As he was passing one of the cabins an Esquimau came to the door and tossed a handful of bones into the middle of the road. They were instantly seized by a pack of shaggy yelping dogs, who leaped from the house and fought and wriggled and tugged against each other for possession of the bones.

Trim, who at the moment was running at full speed, could not turn aside before one of the dogs had run full tilt against him, with the result that the young fellow fell directly in the middle of the yelping pack.

For an instant the lad, who had faced a revolver without flinching, and who feared nothing that a man could do in the way of violence, felt a terrible glow of alarm.

These dogs seemed as mad and savage and bloodthirsty as wolves, and Trim confidently believed that he was in for an

counter that would cost him many ugly
nds, if it did not end his life.
Two or three dogs that he struck as
fell leaped aside, barking and snarl-
g only to turn upon him again.
Trim half rose and threw out his left
n, thus knocking two of the dogs end
and backward, while with the other
nd he brought a revolver into play.
He would have fired at the nearest dog
thin reach, but just as he was about to
l the trigger he was astonished to no-
that one of the brutes, whom he had
n his fall, was licking his hand.
The lad realized from this instantly
at the animals were not unfriendly, and
out waiting for the warning word of
Esquimau, who shouted in alarm
the stranger fell into the pack, he
t up his weapon.
By the time the revolver was again in
pocket the dogs were leaping play-
lly upon Trim, trying to lick his face,
in various other ways showing their
ndly disposition.
"Well," said Trim, getting on his
"if I could get out of all scrapes as
sily as I have out of this one, I
wouldn't have any trouble; I thought I
was going to be eaten up," he added to
Esquimau who had strode forward to
ve the dogs away.
"Dogs play—play like babees," the
imau said, with a grin.

CHAPTER VI.

TRIM'S PRESCRIPTION FAILED TO WORK.

Trim went on to the hotel and found
owler and his men taking things easily.
"Pardner," said the young fellow,
ng Fowler a little to one side, "is the
Frozen Spray ready?"
"Thunderation! Trim," Fowler ex-
imed, "what do you expect? I don't
e the stuff is any more than put on
the drays at the stores."
"Well, it ought to be aboard now,"
m declared.
"Now look yere," exclaimed Fowler,
"I'm jest es anxious about thet thar mine
s you be, but I don't see any reason for
all-fired hurry."
"Well, I do," responded Trim. "Do
you know that there is a steamer in
port?"
"I hered the whistle," Fowler ad-
mitted.
"Well, I don't want it to go any
farther, for I don't want my suspicions
to be known outside our party, or in it
any more than is necessary, but you've
got to race with that steamer to get to
Old Glory first."
"You don't say so!"
"I do, and I mean it. I've not the
slightest doubt that the *Colonia*—that's
the steamer's name—will sail from this
port to take possession of your mine."
"How in creation hev you found thet
all out?"
"Never you mind how. But get your
men together and take them to the stores
with you and hustle everything on board
as fast as you can, then keep your men
there and wait for me."
"The *Frozen Spray* can't beat a steam-
boat," gasped Fowler, in despair.
"It would be a bad handicap, I 'low,"
Trim responded, "but something may
happen; if the *Colonia* don't put out this
afternoon I think we'll get along.
"You must have everything ready to
start by nightfall."
"We couldn't find our course by
night," protested Fowler. "I ain't no
sailor, an' it will be all I can do to make
the course out by daylight."
Trim grunted impatiently.
"Then we'll hev to start at daybreak,"
he said. "But you must be ready to sail
this evening."
Without any farther words the young
fellow returned to the dock, where he
spent the next hour or two in watching
movements on board the *Colonia*.
There was little to be seen. She evi-
dently had more men on board than
would be necessary for a crew, but all
told, they did not number as many as
Fowler's party, though that fact seemed
of little importance to Trim.
What interested him more was the fact
that the vessel was said to be on an ex-
ploring trip and that she had stopped
for coal and provisions.
Berkeley came on shore before Trim
left the docks, and took pains to announce
that the *Colonia* had friends of his on
board who were going to look around

among the islands along the coast for gold, and that quite likely he should join them.

"When is she going to leave Sitka?" asked Trim, indifferently.

"To-morrow morning,'" replied Berkeley.

This satisfied Trim, and he was about to withdraw, when Berkeley said suddenly:

"What did you ask for?"

"Oh!" replied the lad, "I was wondering if you wouldn't like to have me join them."

Berkeley smiled sarcastically.

"You're the kind of fellow," he said, "who likes to gamble on a sure thing, aren't you?"

"I'd like to go aboard the *Colonia*," admitted Trim.

"I'm afraid you're too late, youngster," and with this Berkeley went up into the city.

Trim hung around long enough to see that what Berkeley had said was true so far as stocking the boat with provisions was concerned.

It was evident that a good many articles besides provisions were being put on board, and that there was some hurry about it; however, he was not anxious when, as night came on, he saw that Berkeley and several of the men who had come to port on the *Colonia* were arranging to spend the evening on shore.

Indeed, it seemed to be their plan to make a night of it, for late in the evening they were still gathered around a table in one of the hotels drinking freely.

"If there is any way to do it," said Trim to himself, "I would like to make certain that these fellows are playing just the kind of game that I think they are.

"It would surprise me if it should prove that after all they have nothing to do with Fowler's mine, and yet that thing is possible.

"I wish old Berkeley still had a notion that he would like to have me invest in his scheme. If that was the case I might be in there with them now and piping off all their plans."

Trim wondered if it would not be worth while to go boldly to the private dining room where Berkeley and his friends were passing the evening, and try to get admittance on the plea that he was eager to put a lot of money in a mining venture.

A little thought convinced him that this would not do.

Berkeley already seemed to be a little suspicious of him, and Trim previously had been so shy about mining talk that it would arouse suspicion more than ever now to try any such device.

"There's more than one way to skin a cat," he said to himself, suddenly.

"What's the use being a detective's son if a fellow can't find some way of hearing what other people are saying?"

With this he set off down the street until he came to a drug store; he entered there and bought various articles such as face powder, rouge, a hare's foot, and so on.

"This is pretty poor stuff for making up with," he thought, "compared with what my father and Nick Carter always have with them, but it is the best I can do under the circumstances, and I reckon it'll be good enough."

When these had been wrapped up Trim called for another article. The drug clerk opened his eyes.

"What do you want it for?" he asked.

"I reckon that's my business, pardner," Trim answered, good humoredly.

"I reckon it is, too," responded the clerk, "but when it comes to poisons it's our business also."

"You don't call that stuff a poison, do you?" Trim asked.

"Of course we do; if you should take enough of it, it would kill you."

"I 'low that," said Trim, "but if I should take enough whisky it would kill me, too, wouldn't it?"

"Cert."

"Well, I don't propose to do that, either."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"Then you'll let me have the stuff, won't you?"

The clerk shook his head.

"Not without a prescription," he said.

Trim argued and begged in vain.

The clerk knew what his customer asked was against the law, and he could not be persuaded or bribed to sell any quantity of the article.

Trim accordingly left the store considerably disappointed; but with character-

istic energy he set about finding a way to obtain the stuff he wanted.

He hurried back to the hotel, made certain that the men that he was interested in were still there, and then went out to the house of a physician with whom he was acquainted.

"Well, young fellow, what can I do for you?" asked the physician, pleasantly.

"I want a prescription put up."

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing is the matter with me, but I want this to quiet the nerves of a fellow that I'm interested in."

"What's the stuff you're after?"

Trim told him.

"That's dangerous stuff," the physician said.

"I know all about it," Trim replied, confidently, "and I wouldn't for an instant take any risk with it. A few drops will do for him."

The physician looked at the lad earnestly for a moment, then took a pad of paper from his pocket, wrote something upon it and handed over the leaf, remarking:

"If it was anybody else of your age I wouldn't do this, but I think I know you well enough to believe that nothing worse will come of it than innocent mischief."

"That's right, doc," exclaimed Trim, cheerfully, and he hurried away for fear the physician might change his mind and take back the prescription.

He returned at once to the drug store, where the clerk promptly put up the article desired.

It amounted to but a few drops of liquid, all contained in a tiny bottle that could be carried in the vest pocket.

With this Trim returned to the hotel, where he sought out the proprietor, with whom he was very well acquainted.

They held a whispered consultation, in the course of which Trim dropped a handful of gold coins into the proprietor's purse.

Then Trim went to a wash room and worked upon his face and hands with the toilet articles that he had bought at the drug store.

With the aid of some shabby clothing that he borrowed from one of the Esquimau employees of [illegible] transformed himself soon into a very fair imitation of a native.

He had no wig, but he made up for this by brushing his hair the wrong way and by coloring it liberally with a dark powder.

Thus made up, he showed himself to the proprietor; the latter looked him over critically and exclaimed:

"By gum! young fellow, your own mother wouldn't know you."

"Then I shall get along," Trim responded.

"I don't know about that," was the reply. "They've got bottles in there and aren't sending out for anything.

"What excuse will you have for going in?"

"Leave that to me."

With this Trim turned away and went to the room where Berkeley and his companions were seated.

As he approached the door he noticed that a voice within was speaking in a high tone.

"Sounds as if there was a row coming," he said to himself.

He paused for a moment outside the door to listen.

"Thar's got to be a square divide, as the Americans say, or I don't go any farther."

These words came distinctly, as well as the response, in which Trim recognized Berkeley's voice.

"The divide will be square enough, so what's the use of getting hot about it?"

"Well, but how are we goin' to know thet thar ain't no trick bein' put up?"

Trim would have liked to hear the answer to this question, but just at this moment some one approached rapidly along the corridor, and rather than be caught in the act of listening, the lad opened the door of the room and stepped boldly in.

The men looked up in surprise and anger.

"What the——" began one of them.

"You ring?" Trim inquired, smiling, using the characteristic accent of the Esquimau.

"No, we didn't ring. What are you here for?"

This was spoken by the man [illegible]

evidently been insisting upon the square divide.

"Me thought you ring—want whisky—somethin," Trim answered.

"He's one of the ignorant servants employed in the hotel," said Berkely to his companions. Then, turning to Trim, he added:

"We don't want anything, my man; you can go."

"Me go?" Trim repeated, and he looked with a grin at the bottles on the table.

One of the men in the party saw this glance and gave it just the meaning that Trim desired.

"The Esquimau means well," this fellow said, "unless it happens that he came in just for the sake of getting a drink; if he did he deserves one for his boldness.

"Step up, you undersized son of the snows!

"Step up and take something."

"Me much obliged," Trim responded promptly, making for the bottle.

"Fill him up and have some fun with him," remarked another in the party.

All but Berkeley and the one who had been insisting on a square divide seemed to think that this was a good thing to do, and they gathered round Trim, laughing and nudging each other as if they anticipated a good deal of amusement.

"Have done with the nonsense as soon as possible," growled Berkeley.

"Oh, go on. We've got all night before us," exclaimed one of his companions.

Trim played his part to perfection.

He got the whole crowd laughing by his clumsiness and pretended eagerness in pouring himself a drink.

When he had drained the glass he smacked his lips, took up the bottle, and said:

"Me go now; take this for company."

"No, you don't;" cried one of the men. "We want that sort of company for ourselves."

The man attempted to take the bottle away from Trim, who resisted for a moment; it was a good-natured struggle and lasted but a short time, but in the course of it Trim managed to empty the contents of his bottle into the liquor flask.

"If that don't put them to sleep," he said to himself, "then I'm mistaken, or something was wrong with the prescription."

When the little struggle was over and the men returned to the table, laughing and joking, Trim stood near the door still grinning, as if he wanted another invitation to drink.

"Go out, now," commanded Berkeley.

"Oh, let him stay," said one of the men. "He don't know enough to be of any harm."

"Me like whisky," remarked Trim, pleadingly.

He really did not care much whether he remained longer, for if only the men would all take a drink from the doctored bottle he was quite certain that they would become too sleepy to leave the place for many hours, and for himself, he had no desire to risk any such effect.

Trim had other work to do.

Berkeley and the chief speaker in the party would not consent to the supposed Esquimau's remaining, and accordingly Trim was hustled out of the room, but as he went he saw to his satisfaction that every man in the party was preparing to drink from the doctored flask.

Much pleased with the success of his adventure, Trim returned to the wash room and removed the disguise, and then before leaving the hotel he passed once more through the corridor on which was the room occupied by Berkeley and his companions.

To his infinite surprise the sounds of talking within were louder than ever.

"That doesn't sound like going to sleep," he thought. "What can it mean?"

As he listened he heard plenty of disputing as to the terms of a divide, but what was to be divided he could not make out.

"I think I can see one thing," he said to himself after a while; "that doctor did not give me a prescription for the stuff I asked for; I shouldn't wonder if the clerk gave me plain water or something equally harmless."

Long afterward Trim found that this was the case. The doctor had not dared to give the young fellow an order for the drug which he desired.

For the moment it was enough for

Trim to know that the drug was not doing its work, and he felt that he must hear more of that conversation than could be heard by lingering in the hall, where at any moment he might be interrupted.

While he was in the room he had noticed that, like most Alaskan buildings, it was heated by a huge fireplace.

A fire had been burning there earlier in the evening, but it was out now.

It seemed to give him a way to be present at the meeting of the party without being seen by them.

He made his way to the roof and so to the chimney that went straight down to the room where Berkeley and his friends sat.

The chimney was big enough to allow him to go down easily. It was not built of brick excepting at the very top part, but of roughly-hewn stone.

It was not a very difficult task, therefore, for such an agile lad as he was to make his way down until he was just over the fireplace, where he paused with his knees and elbows resting against projecting stones.

It was still rather hot there, but Trim did not mind that, for the position enabled him to hear everything that was going on. Indeed, he had heard everything from the time he had entered the chimney; but not one word as yet had been uttered to show exactly what business it was that brought Berkeley and the men from the *Colonia* together.

That they were having a lively dispute was clear as day.

"You fellows ought to have confidence in me," Berkeley was saying just as Trim came to rest near the top of the fireplace.

"Confidence be durned!" retorted a voice almost, it seeemd, beneath the listener. "I hain't got confidence in nobody."

"You haven't, hey?"

"No."

"Well, that don't matter, anyhow—you're no good!"

"No good, am I?"

"You ain't worth a nail in an Esquimau's coffin."

"Don't talk that way to me—I'll dance on the graves of every one of you——"

"Oh, shut up!"

These quarrelsome remarks had been exchanged in high voices and very rapidly; at last there was a sound of a blow. It was followed by one of the men staggering against the fireplace violently.

He came up against the wall with such force, in fact, that the stone upon which one of Trim's knees was resting dropped, and Trim, losing his support thus unexpectedly, was tumbled into the fireplace in full view of Berkeley and all the others.

The ashes from the wood fire that had been burning there were stirred up in a dense cloud by his falling, so that the lad was for just an instant obscured from view, and the surprise of the party was so great that they probably would not have recognized him even if it had not been for the ashes

Trim knew that it would not do to be recognized.

His thoughts were like lightning flashes and his actions equally quick.

Before the cloud of ashes had more than risen, Trim threw up his hands, caught his revolvers just as he had done in his adventure with the garroters, and fired both simultaneously at the two lamps by which the room was lighted.

The bullets not only shattered the chimneys, but cut the wicks, thus putting out the lights, and the place was in absolute darkness.

The wildest confusion ensued, of course, and long before it had quieted down and new lights had been struck, Trim was out of the room and, in fact, out of the hotel.

He hung around outside for a few moments until he was satisfied that Berkeley and his companions had decided to remain there for further discussion.

Then he gave up any attempt to listen to their proceedings, and started off to execute a plan he had made for checkmating the Englishman if other plans should fail.

It was a bold, even dangerous device, but he was determined to attempt it.

"More than half of Berkeley's gang," he said to himself, "are now on shore, and if only those on board—well, I'll go out to the *Colonia* and see."

CHAPTER VII.

HADICAPPING A STEAMER.

He went directly to the dock off which the *Frozen Spray* was moored and whistled to the skipper.

It was a signal that had been arranged beforehand, and in response to it a small boat put off from the schooner and took Trim on board.

Most of the men of Fowler's expedition were at that time asleep.

"You're not going to try to start now, Trim, be ye?" said Fowler.

"No," the lad replied.

Trim was in a rowboat alongside. He told the sailor who had rowed him from shore to go on board.

"What's up now, Trim?" whispered Fowler.

"I'm going to try to fix the handicap for this race so that it will be in our favor," Trim replied.

He did not stop to explain himself further, but rowed away in the darkness.

It was at least half a mile from that place to the spot in the harbor where the *Colonia* was anchored.

There was so little shipping there that Trim had no difficulty in locating the steamer by her lights.

When he came near enough to distinguish objects on the deck, he rowed completely around the boat and saw no sign of any human being, unless possibly an irregular object near the bow might be that of a man asleep.

Trim rowed his boat to the stern and made it fast to a cleat on the top of the rail.

The steamer lay so low in the water that he had no difficulty in climbing on board.

It was not possible to do this without making some noise about it, and when he was once on the deck he lay flat down and remained motionless for a moment to learn whether his coming had attracted attention. Nobody stirred.

From the partly-opened door of the gangway leading to the cabin came the sound of snoring, to show that at least one person was on board; whether that irregular object near the prow was a watchman who had fallen asleep could only be guessed, and in any event, the risk of waking him must be taken.

Trim arose, and crouching as he went, made his way to a spot about amidships, where there was a narrow opening that led to the engine room.

He stepped through this upon an iron grating, and again stood still to listen.

All he could hear was the very slight sound that always accompanies steam machinery when the fires are low.

Satisfied thus far that he had aroused nobody, the young fellow took a dark lantern from his pocket which was already lighted, drew the slide, and shot the rays carefully below and around him.

He saw that the grating on which he stood was merely a platform, and if he had taken one step farther he would have dropped six feet downward to another platform which was evidently the place where the engineer stood while on duty.

An iron ladder led straight down to this spot.

Trim closed his lantern, dropped upon his knees and descended the ladder.

Once upon the lower platform, he set the lantern so that its rays would not reach the door to the upper deck, and took three or four articles from his pocket.

One was a small oil can and another was a tiny, but very strong steel saw.

He laid these on the platform and then began to inspect the machinery.

He found to his satisfaction that the device for turning on or shutting off the steam consisted of a three-quarter-inch iron rod projecting from the side of the engine wall, and ending in a small wheel with a handle on its rim.

This suited his purpose much better than if the starting apparatus had been a lever, as is the case in some steamboats.

The lad did not touch the wheel at first. He scanned the engine very attentively for a full minute to satisfy himself that there was no mistake about it. He was sure he was right.

He knew that if that wheel should be turned from right to left the engine would be started and the boat would go ahead.

A lever at the side of the room was evidently used to reverse the current of steam.

Having made up his mind that he could not be mistaken, Trim poured a quantity of oil upon the iron rod close to

the engine wall; then he applied his steel saw to the rod and began to cut it off as close to the wall as he could get it.

In spite of all his care, the saw made a noise that seemed to him was sufficient to wake up all the inhabitants on shore.

He dared not work fast, and yet he dared not lose time, so he stood with the oil can in one hand constantly dripping oil upon the rod, while with the other he plied the saw.

This kept the noise down as much as was possible, and so minute after minute he worked away, pausing only when the strain of holding his arms in one position became impossible to bear longer.

There is no telling how long it took him to cut off this bar; it seemed hours to him, but as the iron was not tempered metal and as the saw was of the finest workmanship, it is hardly likely that he spent more than one hour altogether with the task.

The job was finally done, and as he looked at the engine wall and held the starting wheel in his hand, he said to himself:

"Now, then, there is only about half a pound of iron that I'm going to take away from this craft, but it strikes me that it will take a long time to fix a handle on to that starting rod that will make the boat go, and even if they are able to make it go at once, which they might by drilling a hole and putting a spike into it, they would not dare put to sea unless their starting gear was in perfect order."

He replaced his tools and put the iron wheel in his pocket with them.

Then he closed the lantern, cautiously mounted the ladder, and emerged upon the upper deck.

As he did so he glanced forward and dimly saw the huddled-up figure that he had observed before rise and stretch its arms.

"Hope he's had a nice nap," thought Trim, with an inward laugh.

He crept along the rail to the stern and was about to let himself down into his rowboat, when the light motion of the boat upon the waves caused the rudder chain to rattle. This gave Trim a new idea.

His sense of triumph in damaging the engine was so great that it struck him that it would be a splendid thing to wind up the job by disabling the rudder.

He felt along the inner edge of the rail until he found the rudder chain, and then with his fingers examined it for the space of a foot or two, trying to discover some way by which he could break it readily.

He had an open pocket knife in his hand, for he thought there might be a possibility of prying open a link somewhere.

Suddenly he was startled by a harsh voice demanding:

"Who's there?"

The lad had attempted just one thing too much.

He should have been satisfied with spoiling the engine.

The brief period that he had spent in examining the chain had given the watchman forward time to wake up thoroughly and come aft on a tour of inspection.

Trim realized instantly that he had overdone the thing, and that the *Colonia* was no longer any place for him.

With his open knife he slashed the cord that bound his rowboat to the steamer and leaped over the rail.

As he went he heard the report of a revolver from the deck.

The watchman had fired at him.

Trim's feet struck the gunwale of the rowboat, and the result was that instead of landing in it he tipped the boat bottom up and himself disappeared beneath it.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOWLER TRIES TO PLAY PILOT.

The watchman's shot aroused all on board the *Colonia*, and in half a minute later the deck was wild with excitement.

There were only three or four men there, to be sure, but they were tremendously stirred up, and they peered over the rail aft in vain endeavors to get sight of the stranger who had leaped overboard at the challenge of the watchman.

"He must just have come on board," the latter exclaimed, "for I was making my round when I seen him leaning beside the rail."

There was no reason to doubt the watchman's word, and as the others on board supposed that he had been awake all

through his turn of duty, there was little attempt made to discover whether the stranger had done any mischief.

It was naturally supposed that the unknown man had come on board for the purpose of robbery.

The men found that nothing had been disturbed in the cabin or the wheel house, and that nothing had disappeared from the deck.

No one thought of going to the engine room.

One of the *Colonia's* boats was then on shore, waiting for Berkely and the others to finish their session at the hotel.

The other boat was lowered and a couple of men rowed out to the rowboat Trim had used.

It could be seen dimly in the darkness, floating away upon the tide.

No sound came from that direction, but the lapping of the waves against the steamer's side made the men on board think they heard somebody struggling in the water not far away.

"Look sharp!" they cried to the two in the searching boat; "anybody that's desperate enough to board the *Colonia* at night won't hesitate to shoot ye!"

The men stopped rowing for an instant and peered forward into the darkness.

They could see nothing but a bulky object upon the surface of the water.

"His boat has upset," said one of them, "and it's lying there bottom up."

"Look out that he ain't behind it," came the warning from the *Colonia's* deck.

The searchers rowed cautiously, therefore, and one of them fired a revolver so that the bullet split a splinter from the keel of Trim's boat.

The shot brought out no reply, and the men then advanced to the upturned boat, made fast to it, and towed it to the *Colonia*.

Then it was hauled on deck and examined.

Nothing about it indicated the owner or what had become of him—that is, nothing at that time.

Next morning they discovered marks upon it to show that it belonged to the *Frozen Spray*, but by that time the discovery was of no use to them.

It was about the same time that the engineer found that it was impossible to start the machinery.

It is hardly to be supposed that a lad of Trim's character and experience would be seriously troubled by a ducking.

The men on board the *Colonia* believed that he had been killed by the watchman's shot.

As a matter of fact, the bullet went wide of its mark.

When Trim overturned the rowboat, the upset, of course, threw out of the boat every loose article. Among them was a short, loose plank that had lain in the bottom of the boat as a brace to the rower's feet.

When Trim came to the surface his head struck this bit of plank.

He did not need such an article to help him in swimming, but as he wore very heavy clothing and the water was intensely cold, he thought it best to cling to it for a while until he should have managed to get beyond range of the *Colonia*.

The first thing that occurred to him was that the men on board might fire into the water at random in the hope of some chance shot hitting him.

They did not do this, and while they were searching to see what the supposed robber had taken away, and while they were towing back the overturned boat, Trim, lying on his back and easing himself by holding to the bit of plank, was kicking himself as fast as he could toward the *Frozen Spray*.

It was a long, long swim in the cold and darkness.

He abandoned the plank when he was well away from the *Colonia*, and struck out on his side in the style employed by the best swimmers.

He had not gone far in this way before it occurred to him that there was one more thing he could do to cause delay to the Englishmen.

Acting on this new thought, he changed his course and swam for the shore.

No one was stirring around the docks at that hour.

He made his way without attempt at concealment to the place where another small boat belonging to the *Colonia* lay.

It was the one in which Berkeley and his companions had come ashore.

When they should have finished their discussion they would expect to return in it to the steamer.

Trim got into this boat, knelt upon the bottom and began to bore a hole in it with a little gimlet attached to his pocket knife.

He had no more than begun this when a better plan occurred to his daring mind. Without hesitation he put it into execution at once.

Cutting the rope that made the boat fast to the landing, he took up the oars and rowed away.

He was hardly a dozen yards from the dock when he heard footsteps coming from the direction of the city.

The oars creaked loudly in the locks.

Trim could just see a dim form standing at the edge of the dock.

"He's trying to see me," thought Trim as he stopped rowing; "wonder if he's one of the *Colonia* fellows? If so, I reckon it's just as well that I took the boat."

He shifted his seat to the stern, where he used one of the oars silently as a paddle.

"Who goes there?" demanded a stern voice from the dock.

"Find out, Petey," was Trim's response, but it was spoken to himself.

He was not so foolhardy as to risk the success of his undertaking at this stage by any nonsense

"Who goes there?" came the command in a louder tone.

Trim paddled vigorously, but the noise of the oar in the water was no louder than the rippling of wavelets against the pier.

The man on the dock turned suddenly and ran back.

"He's going to get a boat and give chase," thought Trim; "now for a race!"

He leaped to the forward seat again and pulled at both oars with all his might

No matter how much noise he made, he was determined now to get to the *Frozen Spray* ahead of his pursuer.

The latter evidently found a boat at once, for a moment later Trim saw a dark object emerge from the blackness near the pier.

The pursuer had a light boat, Trim a very heavy one. The youngster was heavily handicapped.

"Swimming's best," he said to himself, and promptly dropped overboard.

The result was that when the pursuer, a police officer, came up to the *Colonia's* boat he found it empty, and no noise or other sign thereabout of the man who had been in it.

The puzzled officer towed the boat back to shore and in due time reported the matter, but long before that Trim had reached the *Frozen Spray*.

The lad was thoroughly fagged out when he arrived there, and attracted the attention of the watchman and Fowler, both of whom were on the alert and watching for him.

He was rigged out promptly in ill-fitting but dry clothing, and very soon felt none the worse for his unexpected bath.

He told Fowler and the skipper of the craft what he had done, and at his urgent demand sail was raised at once, and before sunrise the *Frozen Spray* was miles from Sitka.

This much was satisfactory to Trim for the time being, because his first purpose was to get far enough away to avoid the possibility of capture if the men on the *Colonia* should suspect him of having done the mischief.

Once daylight came, however, he was anxious that the course of the vessel should be laid directly to the mainland, where the stream from Old Glory emptied into the sea.

Then the young fellow found himself facing the worst obstacle in the whole adventure.

Fowler was indeed no sailor.

He had never been in these waters until his trip with his partner, Drew; and although he could remember that they had explored some of the islands, for the most part he could not tell one piece of land from another.

"We went zigzaggin' and crisscrossin' along through yere," he said, doubtfully; "but durn ef I know whether we went to the right hand or the left hand of that island forward."

Trim was in despair. The wind was light, and even if it held as strong as it was blowing then, it might be days before the schooner could reach the mainland.

"I don't think we stopped anywheres yere," Fowler said, about midday. "Thare don't any of these islands look es ef I'd ever seen 'em before."

"It makes a man think," growled Trim, "that there's no such mine as Old Glory."

"Now, see yere," cried Fowler, firing up, 'that don't go. Youngster as you be, I won't hev you doubtin' my word——"

"Oh, well, I take it back," retorted Trim, impatiently. "And I'll go to sleep. Steer the old tub for the mainland, and when we get there we'll tow her along the beach until we find the stream that you went up."

With this he went below.

The others, who realized as fully as Trim did that their chances were slight unless luck favored them, decided to take his angry advice seriously, and the skipper was directed to steer as straight for the mainland as he could go.

Even at that it was necessary to pursue a crooked course, for they constantly found islands in their way, and the distance from Sitka to the mainland is considerably greater than it appears to be from a careless glance at the map.

Moreover, the wind held very light, though steady, and it was not until nearly nightfall of the second day that the skipper told Trim that the mountains just visible ahead were a part of the mainland.

"Now, then, pardner," said Trim, addressing Fowler, "can you recognize any of those peaks?"

Fowler looked long and earnestly. The skipper handed him a spyglass, and for some minutes Fowler searched the horizon with it. He shook his head at last and said:

"I reckon we were some ways to the south of this yere."

"We'll change it to the south, then," returned Trim, desperately, and the skipper changed the schooner's course accordingly.

When darkness came it was decided to lay to for fear they might pass the mouth of the stream which they wished to rediscover.

The next morning Fowler was as helpless in his confusion as before, and Trim began to wish heartily that he had never taken part in the expedition; it seemed like throwing away so much good time and energy—the money part of it he did not care for

He was extremely anxious to accomplish something, and there seemed no hope for it.

They say it's always darkest just before the dawn, and it seemed to be something like that in this case.

About the middle of the afternoon the wind freshened considerably from the northwest, thus giving the schooner the best sailing breeze it could have.

At about the same time Fowler gave vent to a loud hurrah.

"Is Old Glory coming out to meet us in a smallboat?" asked Trim, sarcastically.

"No, durn your sassy tongue," returned Fowler, "but I seen thet mounting over yonder when I was yere before."

And he pointed to a peak lying at a considerable distance to the southeast.

"Make for it, then!" cried Trim, excitedly; "take the glass, Fowler, and search the shore, and the minute you see any signs of that stream of yours let's know about it."

The next three or four hours the schooner sped swiftly over the waves, and Fowler hardly lowered the glass.

It was nearly sundown when he said at last, very quietly:

"We've got thar at last!"

"Where?" asked Trim.

Fowler pointed to a spot almost abeam.

"The stream comes out thar," he said, "right whar it looks like a little beach."

The skipper, who was listening, was beginning to put the boat about in order to go directly to this beach.

"Hold on a minute," said Trim.

And he took the glass.

He had often and often during the journey strained his eyes to the north and west for any sign of the *Colonia*. He had seen none. Now with the glass he repeated the operation.

Over the top of a low-lying island far away he distinguished a thin line of smoke. There was no mistaking it. The smoke came from the funnel of a steamer.

It might not be the *Colonia;* she was hull down behind the islands; but it was not likely that any other craft of her kind was prowling around in these waters at this season.

"Fowler," said Trim, "have you got your bearings so that you could get to Old Glory without following up the course of the stream?"

"You bet!" was the response.

"Then we won't put in here." Trim looked forward. "Make for that rocky point," he said. "That lies just to the port of our course, and drop anchor somewhere behind it, where the schooner can't be seen from this side."

"What's your object in all thet, Trim?" inquired Fowler. "It will be easier to go up the stream in small boats for es far es Drew and me went. It will be thunderin' difficult to lug all our provisions over that ledge and up the mountain to Old Glory."

"I don't care how difficult it is," was Trim's response, "we've got to do it."

"But why?" persisted Fowler.

"Well, if you want to know," Trim replied, "it's a hundred to one that the *Colonia* will drop anchor off this place inside of three hours; if her men get sight of us, very likely they'll hurry up to the mine; if they don't, there is just a chance that they will lie here until morning; then we'll be in possession, see?"

"Possession or no possession," responded Fowler, "the mine is mine, for Drew and me staked off the claim."

"And your stakes have undoubtedly been pulled up," retorted Trim, "and according to law in this part of the world actual possession counts a good deal more than right, doesn't it?"

"I reckon it does."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD GLORY AFLOAT ONCE MORE.

From then until the time the *Frozen Spray* dropped anchor around the rugged headland, Trim was all nervousness for fear the breeze would go down and leave them becalmed.

No such bad luck occurred, however. The breeze held steadily. At no time during the rest of the trip was there any sign of the distant steamer except the first line of smoke on the horizon.

The men forming Fowler's expedition went on shore immediately, carrying only a small supply of provisions, but as much ammunition as could be packed upon them.

Trim believed that it would be wise to be prepared for a hot fight, for if Old Glory were anywhere near as rich a mine as Fowler represented it to be, the men on the *Colonia* would certainly make a desperate effort to obtain possession of it.

As the expedition began to make its way up the ledge in the night, Trim felt just one moment of doubt as to whether his suspicions about Berkeley and the *Colonia* were correct.

"It would be an awful laugh on me," he thought, "if after all it proved that they weren't connected with the case at all."

The men found it an exceedingly tiresome journey; the forest was very dense and thickly strewn with fallen trees; it was impossible to pursue a straight line of march; having climbed the ledge behind which the schooner was sheltered, they had to descend a considerable distance before they came again to rising ground.

In spite of all their haste in getting away from the schooner it was late at night before they started, and after several hours of tramping, following a direction indicated by Fowler and keeping it according to compass, they found their progress blocked by what appeared to be a wide, deep and rapid stream.

"There's no fording," remarked Trim, standing on the bank. "What stream is this, Fowler?"

"I'm blessed if I know," he said; "it's putty nigh daylight, and I might tell then, but in the dark——"

"In the dark," interrupted Trim, "you reckon it's the stream that comes from Old Glory, don't you?"

"I shouldn't be surprised ef it was."

"If you could only make certain of it," exclaimed Trim, "we could follow up the bank, but ef it's the wrong stream it would be taking us out of our course to go up."

"'Twas a mighty crooked stream," remarked Fowler, "an' p'r'aps ef you should throw the light of your lantern around yere a bit I might recognize somethin'."

Trim produced his dark lantern and did as requested.

"It seems like it," said Fowler.

Just then one of the men cried out:

"Durn ef I haven't found a handkerchief!"

"A what?" cried several voices in astonishment.

"How long since hev the Indians in this part of the country took to usin' pocket handkerchiefs?" asked one of the men, sarcastically.

"That's what it is, though," said the man, and he approached the lantern with the handkerchief clinging to a root.

"A handkerchief!" shouted Fowler, in wild excitement. "You onery galoot, thet's Old Glory! Don't you know your country's flag when you see it?"

He shook the water from the dripping cloth and held it up by two corners.

It was indeed the Stars and Stripes.

"That's the very flag," declared Fowler, solemnly, "that my poor pardner, Drew, hitched to a stick to mark our claim, an' 'twas thet thet give it its name of Old Glory."

"Then we're on the right stream," said Trim, quietly, "and I can tell you what's happened.

"The fellows that fired at you tore down the flag and threw it into the brook, and that shows what I've believed all along, that they were Englishmen."

"Up the stream to the mine!" was the instant cry of all hands.

The sun was just rising when at length they came to the ledge and found the beginning of a shaft that Drew and Fowler had blasted there two weeks and more before.

"This is the spot," said Fowler, gravely, "and they've done jest es you said; they tore down our stakes——?"

He paused and went forward to a stick set in the ledge at the spot where Old Glory had formerly floated.

"Durn me," he cried angrily, "ef they hevn't used our own stakes an' put a new name to the thing."

He pointed down to the ground at the base of the stakes where a piece of paper lay, held in place by a fragment of quartz. It had been rained on, but the words upon it were still plainly to be seen.

Trim picked up the paper, and read:

"The Queen's Own Mine. Discovered and claimed by Archibald Berkeley and Mark Slote."

"Slote!" two or three of the men exclaimed, and "Berkeley!" exclaimed the others.

"They're the men I've had my eyes on all this time," said Trim, "and it won't be long before we'll see them here."

"We'll give them a taste of bullets," muttered one man.

"There's a better way than that," said Trim.

All looked at him with some surprise.

"I'd like to give these fellows a rap es well es any of the rest of you, but what's the use of shedding blood when you can take them alive? I'd rather see Berkeley and Slote hang than to shoot them down here, even in a fair fight."

The men were so delighted with the young fellow's shrewdness and success in managing the expedition thus far that they agreed to obey his orders still farther.

"I'll keep this paper," said Trim, putting the Englishmen's claim in his pocket.

"And we'll put up Old Glory where it flew before."

The American flag was again fastened to the stake, and but for Trim's persuasions the men would have given the colors a volley by way of salute.

"If we must use our guns," said Trim, "let's use them when they'll do some good."

Then he stationed some of the men in the thicket from whence the shot had been fired that killed poor Drew.

The others he concealed elsewhere among the rocks and trees.

"We shan't have long to wait," he said.

It was a true prophecy. Less than half an hour after the men had taken their places they heard approaching voices and footsteps.

Presently seven or eight men came into view toiling up the bank of the stream with mining implements and packs of provisions on their backs.

At the head of the party were Berkeley and Slote, and another man who was evidently not a mining prospector, for he was dressed in much better style and looked unaccustomed to marching.

"This is the place," cried Bekeley, and then he halted in astonishment, for his eyes saw the American flag floating on the same spot where he himself had torn it down many days before.

Trim did not give him or the others a chance to recover from their surprise.

He quietly arose from behind the pile of quartz that had been thrown up by Fowler, and holding a revolver in each hand, said:

"Now, gentlemen, every man of you is covered, just as the two Americans were covered when they were at work on this mine. The first one of you that stirs simply gives a signal for the death of every man in your gang.

"This mine is on American soil, it was discovered and is owned by Americans, and they are here to fight for it."

He raised his hand, and at that signal the men concealed in the thickets fired a volley over the heads of the startled Englishmen.

The shots seemed to come from every direction. It was as certain as could be to Berkeley and his men that they were surrounded and that resistance was hopeless.

Accordingly, at another command from Trim they threw their weapons upon the ground, and Fowler and his men came out from the thicket to take possession of them.

In the confusion that followed this Slote attempted to break away. One of the men in the expedition promptly sent a bullet into his shoulder that disabled him and ended the trouble.

To his great satisfaction, Trim found that Slote was wearing a coat from which a button and a fragment of cloth was missing, and the piece of cloth that he had been carrying in his pocket for several days matched the tear exactly.

It proved later that Berkeley and Slote were two members of the gang that had been driven out of the illegal sealing business, and had taken to hunting for gold without any knowledge of mining.

They had discovered Fowler and Drew at their work, and had watched them long enough to see that the Americans had made a good find.

Then they had attempted to kill them both. Failing in this they had carried away specimens of the quartz, and by reason of knowing the sailing route among the islands, had got to Sitka in advance of Fowler.

There they tried to raise money on the strength of the specimens they had brought with them, in order to develop the mine sufficiently to sell it.

Meantime they had sent word to other members of their gang in British Columbia, and had heard no word from them until the telegram came which Trim had picked up.

If it had not been for the way that Trim disabled the *Colonia*, Berkeley and his gang would have been in possession of the mine for at least two days before Fowler's expedition could have arrived. The well-dressed man in the party was a swindler from British Columbia, who had fitted out the *Colonia* to go to Berkeley's assistance.

The end of Trim's first adventure as a detective was the return of all the English party as prisoners to Sitka, where Berkeley and Slote were convicted of murder. It was also proven during the trial that Slote had hired the toughs to garrote Trim.

The others were released, because there was no legal charge that could be sustained against them.

Fowler, of course, maintained his rights to the mine, and shared it among the men who had joined the expedition to recover it.

It has proved so rich a discovery that the prospects are that all members of the expedition will be independently wealthy as a result of it.

Another result of this affair was that the course of Trim's life was changed. The miners and others concerned in the gold-mine case gave him unlimited credit for his skill and nerve in managing it, and Trim found himself the most famous young fellow in Alaska. The Territory was overrun with prospectors, investors, and many evil-minded idlers who are always brought together by mining excitement.

Under such circumstances crime of one kind or another is sure to occur, and when it occurred in Sitka, the people turned to Trim for help. They made him a detective in spite of himself.

He had many exciting adventures in the work that he undertook, some of which are narrated in "Trim's Race Across the Ice Fields" in No. 2 of NICK CARTER LIBRARY.

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